FOA Questions and Answers

These questions were received during the CDC-RFA-EH17-1702 “Enhancing Innovation and Capabilities of the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network” FOA Informational Call on April 28, 2017. Answers are provided to assist potential applicants.

1. **Can applicants avoid repeating the narrative in the work plan to ensure they comply with the 20 page limit?**
   A: Yes.

2. **Will reviewer’s scores be based off of the 20 pages for the project narrative, or will appendices be included for scoring?**
   A: Reviewer scores are based on the complete application, including appendices. An applicant’s project narrative may include up to 20 pages. Additional pages will not be reviewed.

3. **The FOA says that only documents described in the FOA can be attached as an appendix. Can we attach additional documents in the appendix that are not described in FOA?**
   A: No.

4. **Can the work plan template be attached as a miscellaneous document instead of being in the narrative?**
   A: The FOA will be amended in ‘Section H. Other Information’ so applicants can attach a work plan as a miscellaneous document instead of being in the narrative. The amendment will be posted on www.grants.gov.

5. **Organizational capacity is supposed to be included in the 20 page limit; can that be included as attachments/in the appendix instead?**
   A: The Organizational Capacity section must be included in the 20 page Project Narrative and cannot be included as a separate document.

6. **What is the intent on page 5, activities SC 1.B where it says “integrate data into network”? Does this mean having data sharing agreements, or does it mean access to data in some other capacity?**
   A: Activity SC1.B requires recipients to demonstrate broadly how data will be brought into the network and how data are accessed by program staff and internal and external partners, including end users via the recipient portal.

7. **Are activities and strategies supposed to overlap?**
   A: Each individual activity illustrates a distinct Tracking program component. All activities link to their corresponding strategy, and are complementary to the other strategies and activities listed.

8. **In Communications Strategy II, Advanced Activity C2.E, am I expected to co-present/co-sponsor a meeting or webinar once a year, or at the minimum, once during the project period?**

A: In reference to Communications Strategy II: Initiate, maintain, and expand partnerships, Advanced Activity C2.E ("Co-present/Co-sponsor a national or regional meeting/conference or webinar with other grantees or partners") on page 7, an awardee must implement this activity at a minimum of once during the project period. Please note an awardee can either co-present or co-sponsor a national or regional meeting, conference, or webinar, but this must be in coordination with another awardee or Tracking partner.

9. **Which Tracking components need to be done once during the five-year project period, rather than annually?**
   A: Awardees must maintain all core activities on an annual basis. All awardees must implement at least two advanced activities per year with the end goal of implementing all advanced activities by the end of year 5 (project period completion). Once the advanced activity is implemented and completed, it does not need to be completed in future years.

10. **Do 75% of the required activities need to be demonstrated annually, or can some activities be demonstrated once during the past few years?**
    A: Awardees must describe the core activities that are currently in place. Awardees must present a plan for implementing all core activities by the end of year 1; however, these do not all have to be conducted in the past year. This indicator measures the awardee's capacity to conduct these activities, which should lead to outputs listed in the Tracking logic model.

11. **If the word "annual" is not referenced specifically for an activity, does this activity only need to be completed once for the entire five year project period? For example, in Technology and Informatics Strategy I, Core Activity TI1.C, am I expected to conduct a gap analysis annually or once during the project period?**
    A: Awardees must implement/maintain all core activities, including TI1.C, on an annual basis.

12. **GrantSolutions vs Grants.gov- Is this application entirely in Grants.gov? Do we need to worry about doing anything in GrantSolutions?**
    A: Per Wanda Tucker, Grants Management Specialist with the CDC Office of Grants Services, applicants will complete their entire application in Grants.gov. If the applicant is awarded, Grants.gov will transfer the submitted application to GrantSolutions, a grants management service, and the applicant will receive an access code. This code will allow the awardee to access the GrantSolutions web-based system and manage their cooperative agreement.

13. **Section PS 1.A states "Lead, support, and maintain existing Environmental Public Health Tracking Program within state and/or local jurisdictions" What does this mean?**
    A: This activity means that the infrastructure necessary for a successful Tracking program, including technical components, necessary staff, and materials be sustained throughout the project period.

14. **How will it be assessed that 75% of activities are in place? Do the specific activities from FOA need to be included in application? If you reference 22 core activities, does that mean you are good to go regarding meeting 75% of core activities?**
    A: Applications should address how at least 75% of the core activities listed are currently in place, either through a jurisdiction's tracking program or through other jurisdictional activities. Applicants should reference specific activities, and demonstrate how those activities are currently being fulfilled by the

jurisdiction. Merely referencing 22 of the 29 (75%) core activities is insufficient; applicants must demonstrate how the referenced activities are currently being fulfilled by the jurisdiction. Initial reviewers will check applications and determine if the 75% benchmark has been fulfilled.

15. **Regarding Page 7- Advanced activities PS1.D, the sentence says "internships/ fellowships/mentorships for students in environmental public health tracking" are required to complete activities as well as other trainings. Does that mean you HAVE to have internships and fellowships and mentorships, as well as training opportunities, training modules etc. to meet this activity?**
A: Applicants should provide support for Tracking-specific training activities. Examples of this activity include development of in-person or web-based training modules or internship activities for students. Awardees are not required to do all of these example activities.

16. **Is a logic model required? If applicants choose to include it, can it be included as attachment?**
A: No, a logic model is not required. Applicants can include a logic model as an attachment or organizational chart.

17. **If a state is doing similar activities, but not explicitly as part of the Tracking program, can that be included under 75% of activities? Otherwise it would be impossible for new applicants to do so.**
A: Yes, applicants may demonstrate capacity to implement activities through other work. Current activities should demonstrate the capacity to 1) develop an IT infrastructure and processes for disseminating environmental and health data via a public web-based application, 2) building and maintaining necessary IT infrastructure, and 3) conducting analyses using Tracking data and expertise to address environmental health issues at the state and local level.

18. **Have any self-sustaining grantees come off the grant in last several years? In which the state has started providing all money? Is the expectation that after project period, current grantees will no longer apply for grant?**
A: No. Sustainable or alternative sources of funding are a goal for state and local Tracking programs, but there is no expectation for awardees to become self-sustaining after the project period.

19. **Regarding Page 9, letters of support- Do you still need a letter of support from a lab if the applicant does not collaborate with it?**
A: No. A letter of support from the public health or environmental health laboratory is only necessary if the applicant includes activities that involve these groups.

20. **Who should letters of support be addressed to? The PI?**
A: Letters of support can be addressed to the PI. However, this is not a requirement. For objective review purposes, it does not matter who the letters of support are addressed to. The content of the letters of support should be consistent with proposed activities or collaborations.

21. **Are we allowed to have screenshots (ex. of portal) in appendix?**
A: Yes.

22. **What needs to be specifically included in the applicant's evaluation plan?**

A: An initial evaluation plan must be submitted with the application. The criteria are listed on Page 29 in section ii: Evaluation and Performance Measurement. The CDC program will work with Awardees to submit an Awardee Evaluation and Performance Measurement Plan within 6 months of the award.

23. **Does a data management plan need to be included as part of the evaluation plan?**
A: The Data Management is a new requirement for all CDC FOAs. A complete Data Management Plan can be submitted within the first 6 months along with the finalized Evaluation Plan.

24. **Where should applicants send additional questions related to the FOA?**
A: Send all questions to CMQ8@cdc.gov.

25. **This question has to do with the possible listing of short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term activities on the work plan as described on page 4. One way of looking at this is that the work plan is prescribed by CDC to necessarily have a one-year horizon. This could be considered a short-term horizon, I suppose. However, is it in our Evaluation Plan where the horizon of short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term activities fit best? Or do you have any other advice where we would consider placing the short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term goals?**
A: The applicant's work plan should consist of activities for year 1; this includes short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term activities. Some activities will overlap years.

26. **Can we get more context on what seems like a new long-term goal that over 50% of requests for data or information should come from individuals or groups outside of traditional public health practice (page 4)? Could you define what is included in "traditional public health practice"? Is there any background on how this goal came about?**
A: We created this long-term outcome to better assess the reach of the Tracking Program and Tracking Network data and information to individuals or groups that may not be traditionally as engaged in public health, such as academia, non-governmental organizations, other federal agencies (e.g., Department of Transportation), and commercial industry.

27. **What should we do about any previous/existing or planned work that spans or covers more than one core or advanced activity? Is there any prohibition against 'counting' the same work in more than one place?**
A: Many of the activities can be combined and explained by a single task/project. Applicants should be explicit on how their proposed task/project can cover multiple core and advanced activities. Some of the activities will overlap and can be applied in more than one place of the application.

28. **On the work plan template table, "tasks" and "strategies and activities" are distinguished in separate columns. Should we specify the related Activities listed in the FOA verbatim under "Strategy and Activity" and separately describe the specific tasks we are proposing in the Tasks column? For example, for Activity SC2.A, we could either just use that reference code or actually write out the description from the FOA in the Strategies and Activities column? Or is something else expected here? It seems our tasks and strategies can go together and the Activity can be specified using its code.**

A: Yes, the 'tasks' and 'strategies and activities' are separate. For the application, the 'tasks' are considered projects and 'strategies and activities' would show how the applicant completes the task. Applicants need to include the Activity code, such as SC2.A, in their work plan, but they can also write out the description.

29. **In strategy C1.B, is the "program-wide communication activity" referring to an activity identified by the national program that grantees will participate in? At times it's not clear whether reference to "Program" is about the national or the grantee program.**
A: In Strategy C1.B and in most cases, a lower-case 'p' in program refers to the recipient's program. An upper-case 'P' in Program refers to the CDC Tracking Program. Strategy C1.B was intended for the recipient program to participate in a CDC-led activity.

30. **Within the CDC Project Description (pgs. 3-9) as well as in the Application and Submission Information, Project Narrative section (pgs. 22-24), there are 5 sub-sections within the Approach (section b., pg. 23). The Approach appears to consist of: i. Purpose, ii. Outcomes, iii. Strategies and Activities, 1. Collaborations, 2. Target Populations and Health Disparities. However, within the Review and Selection Process section (pgs. 28-31), the Approach (awarded a max of 40 points) includes only the Purpose, Strategies and Activities, and the Work Plan, excluding mention of Outcomes, Collaborations, or Target Populations and Health Disparities sections. Why?**
A: The Phase II Review process is organized as a guideline for areas of importance to CDC, but the scoring does not directly correspond to previous descriptions of the required sections. Outcomes, Collaborations and Target Populations are mentioned in several sections of the FOA and Phase II Review. The Health Disparities language is not required and will not be scored.

31. **Can we use web links in our application? For example, can we link to the Required NCDM list, or to our Tracking Portals, rather than attempting to summarize references to these within the application?**
A: Applicants can use web links in their application, but reviewers will not have the capability to visit those links because the applications are printed before reviewed. Applicants should include this information as supporting documents.

32. **How specific must the timeline be? Can it just indicate grant years 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5?**
A: Applicants should include specific timelines for the first year of the project. A high-level overview is not required, but can be included for subsequent years.

33. **Our primary role would be to use our existing web portal to host the NCDMs, provide health informatics expertise (including participation, secure upload of data to CDC, etc.). My question, is it OK for the web portal to reside outside of DHHS, and if so, would we need to re-brand it to NC DHHS, or do you think it could be a collaborative East Carolina University/North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services?**
A: Yes, the portal can reside outside of DHHS, but it must be linked to a DHHS site. All awardees would need to follow the CDC Tracking Program branding guidance.